

504  
1.00

COMMUNITY SERVICE, INC.  
Box 243  
Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387



# COMMUNITY COMMENTS

Volume XXI

Number 1

August, 1971

Intentional  
and  
FOLK  
Reconstruction  
Mutual

Community  
the  
SOCIETY  
through  
Aid



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Intentional Community and the Folk Society	
by Griscom Morgan . . . . .	1
Twelve Points of Self Help	
by Arthur Raper. . . . .	16
My Critique of Community	
by A.J. Muste. . . . .	13
Technology and Culture of the Small Community	
by Arthur E. Morgan . . . . .	15

ABOUT THE COVER: Notice the sword through the peasant's back? This is Albrecht Durer's woodcut (a chest is left out of the column) on the suppression of the German peasants' rebellion--an ironical "column of victory". The peasants' rebellion was the culmination of fifty years of struggle and revolt by the people of northern Europe--peasants, plebians, and local nobility against growing impoverishment, indebtedness, and oppression. Supporters of the rebellion were almost without exception the village notables--mayors, judges, innkeepers, rich farmers. The revolt took place especially where the social order of the cooperative folk society was strongest and came into conflict with authoritarian power.

Germany had left behind it more than two hundred years of growing prosperity and freedom through an economic order that permitted guilds to flourish, peasants to prosper, and small towns to become centers of industrial and artistic life. This remarkable era in Europe was made possible by a plentiful medium of exchange and low interest rates resulting from the seigniorage tax on local currencies. But this tax was discontinued almost a century before the peasant's rebellion in 1525, and with its ending came scarce money and high interest rates analogous to the Nixon administrations period of high interest, enabling capital to dominate the economy, doubling and trebling the interest rates, forcing people off the land into large cities, displacing guilds with capitalist exploitation of labor, and impoverishing the peasants. The suppression of the peasants' revolt and impoverishment of the people degraded the farmer to a working animal. Intellectual leaders no longer came from the ranks, as formerly did such leaders as Luther and Zwingli.

A fuller account of this economic history and its implications is available in the Community Service monograph, The Economics of Non-Inflationary Full Employment, in Hugo Fack's The Gothic--1150-1450, and in the Community Comments issues on "The Community Economy". Durer's woodcut gives historical perspective of this crucial problem of our time.

## INTENTIONAL COMMUNITY AND THE FOLK SOCIETY: RECONSTRUCTION THROUGH MUTUAL AID

By Griscom Morgan

Intentional communities and communes have been undertaken primarily to develop alternative better ways of life in contrast to those dominant in the world, hopefully a way of brotherhood, cooperation, justice and life fulfillment. The good life is conceived as not something that must wait till after the revolution, or to be served to others from professional capacities as the sick physician serves his patients, but to be realized in our own way of life, started with ourselves in fellowship.

Thirteen years ago A.J. Muste criticized the intentional community and commune movements as too escapist, evading social problems and realities. He wrote, "our only valid objective is the transformation of society, not the building of a shelter for the saints or a secular elite within a corrupt social order, which is in effect assumed to be beyond redemption." Liberation, September, 1958)

But endeavors to transform society where people have not begun with their own lives have not proceeded well in the hands of reformers, revolutionists, VISTA volunteers, and others. An article in Transaction magazine<sup>1</sup> depicts the disillusionment of Appalachian people and community organization workers following the work of the Appalachian volunteers. The dominant political powers and economic order defeated them, and the revolutionaries among them found their endeavors accentuated the tragedy of the mountain people. The volunteers could get out of the mountains and escape from backlash tyranny of the political and economic lords of Appalachia while local people had to continue living with it. Similarly, Peace Corpsmen have all too commonly found that their work among the underprivileged overseas was superficial and short lived, leaving behind little relief in the hopelessness of people living under tyranny and exploitation.

Nor is the experience of Leninist revolutionaries greatly superior. Begun in violence, they have violence deeply ingrained in their character. Stalin's tyranny was an outgrowth of Lenin's ethics and many of the American left have been shocked by massacres of principled socialists and communists under Stalin.

In America today the hopelessness of the rank and file folk societies extends from the more prosperous rural town and farm areas to the extremes of despair in coal mined Appalachia and the blacks in the deep South. The hopelessness stems from a combination of economic and educational forces that we have analysed in detail elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> The small communities are impoverished so that abler youth feel they must leave to have opportunity. Educational systems expedite their leaving and moving to the city, and the

abler become there a separate privileged caste. Thus to work with rank and file communities under prevailing conditions means to work with leadership that will presently escape from the community or from which the abler leadership, initiative, energy, and cultured vision are already gone. Organization and endeavor to improve underprivileged and impoverished people is thus undercut at the most important place--by loss of the very people who could give hope to the community. Moreover, in such a community the would-be reformer, revolutionary or organization worker could not envision himself staying and living under such dead circumstances. The lack of upward mobility of the Chicanos and some other similar groups make them exceptions to this rule, noteworthy in contrast with the rest of the rural community and union scene.

Until these central causes of degeneration of rural and inner city society are coped with, most of the work at community organization, social amelioration, or political revolution tends to be fraught with futility. We see the youth who are attempting to escape from the old disintegrating order recreating and reexperiencing the problems of the rural societies that are so disadvantaged and driven against the wall by capital, modern technology, and the ways of the dominant social order. As an alternative to the disintegration of the cities, these young people are choosing to reexperience the problems of the rural societies. However, those folk societies that have been driven against the wall by big capital and technology had more capacity to live on low income, and to work together as communities than have most newcomers into the commune fold. Commune members usually have youth and energy, some have college education and inherited wealth, but rarely have they faced the basic issues which have already defeated the folk societies which tried to resist the steamroller of the dominant order.

Gary Moffatt, editor of Alternate Society, wrote of this problem: "This whole question of economic survival has begun to haunt me; the vast majority of communal farms seem to be either folding or relying on outside financial help to continue, and most of the people who are trying to do worthwhile things in the city are also desperate for funds to survive on. I have become increasingly convinced that Kropotkin had the right idea: small self-governing economic enterprises creating a functioning society through voluntary inter-cooperation; but how to bring it about?"<sup>3</sup>

Is it possible to put these two frustrated and inadequate movements together and make one that is whole and adequate to cope with both personal and communal needs and social problems? We suggest that this is a way that has proved itself in practice.

Instead of youth escaping from the problems of society by retreating into the isolated commune, youth can turn this idea around and conceive of the commune as the way in which they can live and serve and build with common people in rural communities, putting their own education and culture

and youth to work where they are most needed. The dominant culture has robbed the rural community of its best youth, its initiative and medium of exchange, making it unbearable for individuals with culture and progressiveness to live. Groups of pioneers can support each other in relation to such communities and rebuild hope. In contrast to the one or two year period of service of the Vista Volunteer in a rural community, such groups can have a life-time commitment for enduring development, a time span of association necessary for significant change and development. Individual teachers, ministers or health workers commonly find the social and cultural environment of rural America too dead to endure, and if they are to continue away from the metropolis, they concentrate in the privileged county seats away from the fundamentalist and underprivileged people. In contrast, the intentional community group can locate out in the country and reinforce each other while living close to the people. Thus in intentional communities they can build up a "critical mass" of a sufficient number of like-minded people necessary for a viable society. But they will fail if in the country-side they isolate themselves unto themselves, and if they fail to relate themselves to, have fellowship with, and learn from the folk society in the midst of which they have moved. They will need that folk society and its heritage just as the folk society needs them. For folk societies, however brutalized and impoverished, have values that people of the urban middle class and intellectuals have lost and cannot well regain on their own.

The question follows, can pioneers in community thus relate to the folk societies of our nation? The recent experience of many communes and intentional communities has not been promising, and such people repeatedly question, how can one get along with the neighboring people without engendering fear, hostility and violent reaction from them?

Part of the answer to this question lies in our recognizing the extent to which we are in the tradition of the same culture which overran and destroyed folk cultures of the past ranging from the exploitation of folk cultures in rural England, Scotland, and Ireland, to the white man's exploitation of the Indians of the Americas. The "white man problem," so bitterly experienced by the American Indian, is the overbearing attitude of urban civilization toward rural peoples and of church and state hierarchies toward people not under their control. They are regarded as things, not people, as objects of exploitation, enemies to eliminate, and as individuals to evangelize and "educate" rather than as living cultures and fellow human heritages. The arrogance of many communes toward the surrounding folk culture partakes of the same qualities. Insensitiveness to neighbors, to folkways, and to hard won standards, and disdain for the conservatism of rural people are both part of the same attitude. It was expressed by a white school teacher in a Hopi school who allowed no place in the school for the Hopi heritage; on being asked about this she answered, "what is there worth keeping in the Hopi culture?"

The spirit necessary for the enlarged and deepened role of the intentional community movement and its relationship with the people of our land has counterparts in past endeavors whose effectiveness has been proved. Among these the students of early Oberlin College, following the example of John Frederic Oberlin in his pastorship in the Vosges Mountains of Alsace, were inspired to go and serve and live with needy peoples over rural America. They sought to undo the evils of slavery and of oppression of the American Indian. Selfless devotion to this service, in which they sought to avoid imperialism of churches motivated to capture converts, endeared them to those among whom they worked such as the black people in the deep South and the Associated Tribes of North Dakota. The equalitarian spirit of the Oberlin students was characterized by the decision of one graduating class which, according to Dr. E.A. Sutherland's Studies in Christian Education, refused diplomas because they were marks of privilege and distinction from the common people. So they went without degrees, sharing the common lot of the people among whom they served. This account may be inaccurate in fact, but is true of the spirit of the early Oberlin College.<sup>4</sup>

Following this tradition of equalitarian service the Seventh Day Adventists, developed a vision of intentional community in rural communities where they could serve among the poor and ignorant and needy. These groups worked in the same spirit as did John Frederic Oberlin among the Vosges villagers, only they did so in communal groups, sharing the common occupations as their basis of support rather than living on the missionary's income and privilege. Thus they did not build on a foundation of dependency on charity. They demonstrated an effective and good life by example. Their beliefs in the honor of common labor within a community economy and community fellowship expressed the golden rule in practice as the basis of life in contrast to the prevailing pattern of dominant individual self interest. At the same time they made the commune or intentional community a layman's mission among surrounding people in need and an educational center for learning the arts of such a way of life. Their competence in economic, health, agricultural, religious and educational community enterprises and research led them to be respected, loved, and depended on wherever they spread in their communities in Tennessee, North Carolina, Kentucky, and Georgia. Their Layman's Foundation established a land trust along the same lines as that of the Jewish National Fund in Israel, making land available to pioneering groups, enabling them to make new beginnings on the land without having to have a large amount of capital. And the group of communities thus associated under the Layman's Foundation maintained cooperative fellowship with each other in the same kind of "community of communities" that Martin Buber remarked about the Israeli kibbutz movement. Their rejection of the dominant materialism and selfish attitudes of our civilization, however, was coupled with their taking the Bible as the final word of truth and thus carried them into the arms of fundamentalism and cut their roots from the current of social thought to the point that they became a backwater rather than the forefront of social progress. That trend of sectarian isolation was resisted by

such of their leaders as E.A. Sutherland, president of their pioneering intentional community college--administrator, teacher, doctor.<sup>5</sup>

Similar elements of selfless service and identification with the common people while maintaining a strong movement of vision, fellowship and mutual endeavor in a new way of life made possible the Chinese revolution under Mao Tse Tung. We do not have to accept the ethical nihilism, violence and ruthless opportunism of Lenin and Stalin to see the truth in Mao's exhortations "to link oneself with the masses, one must act in accordance with the needs and wishes of the masses. All work done for the masses must start from their needs and not from the desire of any individual however well intentioned... we should not make social change until, through our work, most of the masses have become conscious of the need and are willing and determined to carry it out. Otherwise we shall isolate ourselves from the masses. Unless they are conscious and willing, any kind of work that requires their participation will turn out to be a mere formality and will fail."<sup>6</sup>

"Our congress should call upon the whole party to be vigilant and see that no comrade at any post is divorced from the masses. It should teach every comrade to love the people and listen attentively to the voice of the masses; to identify himself with the masses wherever he goes and, instead of standing above them, to immerse himself among them; and, according to their present level, to awaken them or raise their political consciousness and help them gradually to organize themselves voluntarily and to set going all essential struggles permitted by the...circumstances of the given time and place."

Mao learned from his experience of having to depend on and relate to the Chinese peasants that it was necessary to overcome the intellectual attitudes of arrogance and superiority to the people. He wrote, "we should go to the masses and learn from them, synthesize their experience into better articulated principles and methods, then...call upon them to put these principles and methods into practice to solve their problems..."<sup>8</sup>

New community development, whether of new communes in country or city, or of a new order within existing towns and small cities cannot take place on virgin country where there are not already societies with an order and tradition of their own. The "settling" of America from Europe was by displacement of the American Indian, it was not on "virgin soil". There are indeed areas of sparse settlement, relative vacuums of human habitation in which communities need to develop, but there are not places without human society. This poses the question of how any new developments of society are to relate to existing ones. And this question in turn brings us to the parallel question of how any new development can take place without a past, without a heritage of ways of living. All of us are to a large extent the lengthened image of the past; and when we gather in community the divergent heritages we bring tend to conflict, for we do not start from scratch

as the proverbial chicken that had not scratched yet. Even that chick had the mother hen's tutelage with which to begin life. So any group coming into an area already settled is bringing in another heritage, another culture to compete with that already there. Shall this incoming group recreate the kind of conflict that developed between the settlers from Europe and the American Indians, or the ideological conflict that aggressive new ideologies such as Christian orthodoxy, Mormonism, Communism, or the Muslem faith brought to different parts of the world?

The ecologist Paul Sears observed that in new relationships in nature "conflict precedes cooperation". That has largely been the case in human societies. Our own heritage has had so strong an element of conflict in its relationships between cultures that unless we deliberately develop alternative ways of relating to other societies we will continue to run into the violent confrontation that communes in new areas have already been experiencing. The very attitude of asserting that all we want is freedom to do our own thing, that we want no involvement with neighbors, is itself a basis of violence. What more did the European settlers want of America?

Intrinsic to the good society is the development of sound relationship with and improvement upon our own heritage out of which we have developed what we are. If we try to deny the past it will assert itself in unconscious ways and we will be its slaves. The great physicist James Clark Maxwell expresses a basic principle of life in what he called his nostrum, or cure-all: "An abandonment of willfulness without an abandonment of will but rather by a great development of will whereby instead of being consciously free and really in subjection to unrecognized laws we consciously act in accordance with law and are thereby free from its interference." Who has not seen the son or daughter revolting from the parent and in the very revolt expressing the qualities of the personalities he is revolting against? If in the new community we violate the sensitivities and traditions of the surrounding society into which we move we will have proved ourselves true inheritors of the violence of the settlers who displaced the American Indian and piously sought to enlighten the primitive savage by converting his children to be proper Christian farmers.

What is the alternative? Crucial to the alternative is to have reverence for life, not only of individual human beings, but equally for the life of societies and cultures. We need to have an eye to the beauty and capacity to live under adverse circumstances of the cultures and religions that so greatly differ from our own, and in that appreciation we can develop relationships that will be mutually beneficial. We cannot teach those from whom we will not learn. We cannot share with those from whom we will not receive. We cannot maintain our own integrity as a new social development if we cannot respect the integrity of the societies with whom we associate. And we cannot develop the basis of the kind of society we hope for if we do not develop it with neighboring societies. If we try to rush our neighboring society into

the kind of relationship we seek, we will break the necessary slow development of trust and mutuality that must grow with time. So we have in our hands the makings of the new better world in our relationships with the difficult and seemingly intransigent and hopeless old world about us. As examples of this kind of approach we will mention a few cases.

A college graduate married a man who inherited a family business in a small conservative rural town. Her religious liberalism set her off from others in the town and she was consequently isolated. She did not force herself on the community or explode against its narrowness, but found places and ways in which she was needed. The spirit in which she worked over the decades endeared her to the community and she grew to a position of social leadership and respect so that the entire community developed in openness and progressiveness as it could not without her aid. In contrast, in another community the progressive element in control of the school board brought in a superintendent who aggressively used the support of the progressives to make drastic change in the school system, against the bitter opposition of the conservatives and with little consideration for their feelings. The end result was a polarization of the community, a violent political battle in which the progressives lost, their entire program of change was thrown out and the hope of the community was set back perhaps for generations.

One of the greatest victories we had for the village of Yellow Springs was at a time when McCarthyite reaction was at its height, polarization between right and left was severe, and hope seemed lowest. In the Community Council, where this conflict had a focus, its leadership concentrated on reconciliation. Through this endeavor of the leadership, for the first time conflicting factors began to work together, factors that had been in uncommunicating conflict since progressive people had begun to move into the community in significant numbers. This reconciliation was far from complete and was but a turning point in an ongoing process, but it opened the way to improvement. It did not mean compromise of differences or a victory of one faction over the other but a mutual relationship and communication that allowed respect and cooperation to develop.

In Ireland Father Hayes had undertaken to develop community and cooperative ways in a severely faction-ridden society. He found that progress depended significantly on holding up action until there was consensus, in which all groups could assent to action. This was a crucial element in the success of the Muntir Na Tire movement in Ireland.

In programs for social change it has been observed that in society, as in mechanics, every action engenders an equal and opposite reaction. So if we are to accomplish a progressive change in society our actions need to be such that the "equal and opposite reaction" will be good and creative and not divisive and estranging. This can happen if our actions are in the spirit of

mutual respect, love, sympathy, appreciation and freedom from self-seeking and egotism. The reaction to friendliness may not be immediate, but in the long run it tends to be friendliness.

New communities and communes are generally so involved in the minimum essentials necessary for surviving that they tend to have little time or energy left for neighboring and service to their neighboring areas. The very pressures for survival tend to crowd out these considerations. The important thing is the spirit and motivation, the outlook and attitude. The most hard pressed and impoverished individuals and communities can live in the spirit of brotherhood and be strengthened by it even though they have very little to spare. That is the way of the poor who have the culture of fellowship and sharing. But the most well-to-do who undertake to cultivate public relations by sharing and attention to the community may fail, for the motive is selfish and the public becomes aware of the motive.

One commune was located near a large highway on which there were many accidents. At one such accident commune members gathered to aid the victims, and a visitor was impressed that the victims were left with inadequate care while commune members were discussing whether such service to accident victims could not be made a source of income to the hard pressed community--as by an ambulance service. This was observed to be characteristic of the self-centered attitudes of the commune. In contrast, some members of another intentional community undertook a youth club for drop-out and delinquent youth in the nearby area who were causing trouble to the general public as well as to the intentional community. In discussing the project in a community meeting a leader observed that you cannot "buy" good relationships with such youth by this action and that it would be futile so far as the community's relationship with them was concerned. The group who had undertaken the youth club responded that they were not doing it with that motive but out of concern and good will for the youth. The end result was a full turn-around in the attitudes of both the youth and their parents toward the community. Just as the human relationships within a community are not so much measured by the quantity of interaction and association as by the quality, so are the relationships of the community with its neighbors measured more by the quality of spirit than by the quantity of interaction. It cannot be said that a new community is too poor to afford a good relationship with its neighbors because of the pressure of circumstances. It is our spirit and use of such circumstance as we have that will make or break us.

The new society, the new community at once requires groups of pioneers working together, pooling their force and resources, reinforcing each other in their departures from past ways of living. At the same time it requires mutuality and neighborly involvement with the surrounding world. Thus reinforcement in group fellowship can simultaneously be reinforcement in outreach, friendliness and service to surrounding societies and not in isolation against the world.

The capacity to develop in this way is not easy to come by. It does not come primarily by being endowed with it, but by the desire and will to develop it, to stay by the task of developing it and paying the price for it together in fellowship with others of like mind.

Footnotes and References:

1. Bruce Jackson, "In the Valley of the Shadow", Transaction, June 1971, Vol. 8, No. 8, p. 29.
2. The Community Comments dealing with these issues are Volume 20, numbers 1 and 2, two issues on "Community Policy and Initiative Necessary to Rural-Urban Balance and Economic Wellbeing," and two issues on "The Small Community as Educator" and "The Human Scale in Schools" Volumes 6 and 7.
3. Gary Moffatt in a personal communication to Community Service. He made a similar statement in the May 1971 issue of Alternate Society.
4. Robert Samuel Fletcher, A History of Oberlin College, Oberlin College, 1943.
5. Madison College: 1904-1954 Fifty Years of Progress at Madison, Madison College, Tennessee.
6. Mao Tse Tung, "The United Front in Cultural Work" (October 30, 1944), Selected Works, Volume III, pp. 236-37.
7. Mao Tse Tung, "On Coalition Government" (April 24, 1945), Selected Works, Volume III, pp. 315-16.
8. Mao Tse Tung, "Get Organized!" (November 29, 1943), Selected Works, Volume III, p. 158.

COMMUNITY COMMENTS is issued four times a year (and copyrighted) by Community Service, Inc., P.O. Box 243, Yellow Springs, Ohio 45387. Subscription: \$2.00 per year.

COMMUNITY SERVICE, INC., is a non-profit organization devoted to serving the interests of the community as a basic social institution, and invites membership and support from persons with interest in this field. A part of the \$5 annual dues paid by members is credited to COMMUNITY COMMENTS subscription.

## TWELVE POINTS OF SELF-HELP

By Arthur F. Raper

( Some of America's best insights in human problems are developing in concerns for world-wide social regeneration. For example, while poor migrant labor on large farms is increasingly placing our own small independent farmers to disadvantage, our nation is laboring overseas to help the small farmer and farm community to achieve independence and well-being. Some of the wisdom gained abroad is needed here at home. The following article by Dr. Arthur F. Raper, social scientist of the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, U.S.D.A., is adapted from Foreign Agriculture of almost twenty years ago.

Dr. Raper's comments center around the attitudes of the community worker. In the older countries we have more clearly in view some requirements which are less perceptible but none the less present in America. For example, true humility is all too rare among those who would aid the community, whether professional or not, and few qualities are more essential. Does one's ego depend on the status that comes from helping others? Are we equally willing to do the work we are helping others to do? Is it the long advance or immediate results we are concerned to achieve? Do we fully appreciate and respect the work and contribution of unrenowned community members and communities?

Such "cultural and psychological factors" as Dr. Raper calls them, are effective only as the outgrowth of an apprenticeship in life whereby sound attitudes grow out of experience and practice. How can one have appreciation and community of feeling for others without community of experience? How can one deal with people as equals if he has not been in a relationship of equality? How can one be willing to do the slow unpublicized labor of life without having actually done it to the point of having creative enjoyment in it? Such is the character of some of the most important qualifications for service in the community, in education or in the professions. He who would serve without having so qualified himself is a hazard to the community and is sensed to be to some degree untrustworthy or an imposter. Education and the professions too readily give lip-service to such criteria of sound service, without realizing the necessary conditions for their true development.)

"If we would be effective in helping the peoples of Asia and of other lands to a better level of living, we ourselves must learn to work with the people. Self-help must be a two-way road. We of the West need to realize the many contributions which the people of Africa, Asia and Latin America have given us already.

Most of the people in the Near East and Southeast Asia still assume it is virtually impossible to increase food production. It will help if we will remember how new our own understanding is in this matter. . . . Their greatest fear is that things will get worse, and to them "change" often suggests just that possibility. Therefore, thorough consideration must be given to cultural and psychological factors.

1. Find a community of feeling (as in food, worship, cultural contributions) . . . .

2. Start where the people are.

3. Try to understand why people do things the way they do . . . .

Many present practices are akin to those of our own great-grandparents who lived as pioneers in this country or, still a little earlier, in Europe. For us to function effectively at this point, we will often have to use our imaginations . . . .

It is also important to understand the outlook of the village dweller. The village dweller is not primarily an individual, but rather a member of a group.

4. Carry on activities in which the people themselves are interested.

It is our impression that we need to spend more time finding out what the people want for themselves, and less time deciding among ourselves what we think they need. If this basic principle is adhered to, there is little likelihood that we will fail in our desires, for our technical self-help services will be wanted by them.

5. Help the people believe they can improve their situation. There will be little incentive on the part of village people to apply themselves to their problems unless they come to believe they can improve their situation. That is why the initial performance had best be centered upon very elemental human situations. Once there is the belief that improvement can be made--and even the most likely areas will not be easy--then the way is open for further development.

6. Be content with small beginnings. The promoters of self-help activities must be prepared for a tardy response from villagers. Small changes should be cherished. The first innovation is the most difficult. Quite naturally, villagers who have lived at the same place and in the same way for a long time have developed a close-knit culture, which is generally intolerant of change.

7. Use the villagers' own organizations. We will need to give careful attention to doing things in ways that fit into local organizational framework. It takes less energy to use existing organizations than to set up new ones. Furthermore, when we use what exists, the leaders of cooperating groups

serve as sponsors of activities we are promoting and so assure local participation. The very genius of self-help lies in utilizing existing physical and social resources which include established group relationships no less than soil fertility.

8. Watch the villagers' pace and keep in step with them. We need to remember how different our backgrounds and experiences are from those of the people with whom we are working. We will need to allow time for questions to be formulated. The villager will take little for granted. Rather he will want to see every step of each activity.

9. Place responsibility on the people as soon as they can take it. The self help plan operates best when the person being helped knows he will be given full recognition for any progress he makes. This approach is most important; otherwise the villagers will sense the program is not designed primarily for them. If the villagers are given all the responsibility they can take, the persons who initiated the project are free to move elsewhere and start anew.

10. Deal with the people as equals. Dealing with the villagers as an equal is perhaps the most basic point yet made. It is doubtful whether anything can be done effectively on any other basis. The equalitarian approach, basic in all education, is especially needed when dealing with the villager, for he often looks with suspicion upon the outsider.

11. Expect growing pains. The villagers themselves, as they begin to have hope, will want to have their own way. We may expect at times to find them somewhat demanding, wanting to assume more responsibility than they are able to carry. These evidences of growing pains should be greatly welcomed, for they, more than anything else, demonstrate that the villagers are beginning to want to do things for themselves. The person who is not prepared to adjust himself to these growing desires of villagers to help themselves should not have responsibility in promoting self-help programs. The truth is, a self-help project is a failure if there are no evidences of growing pains.

12. Don't expect thanks from the people being helped. In the very nature of the situation the recipients of assistance are seldom in a position to offer open appreciation. Rather, they are usually aware that they are making headway belatedly and, therefore, will often be somewhat on the defensive. We should keep this point squarely in mind, lest we feel we have failed because the villagers do not seem to appreciate what we are doing. In the long run the villagers will be thankful, but only after self-help demonstrations have proved their initial effectiveness."

## MY CRITIQUE OF COMMUNITY

By A.J. Muste

If we start with the concept that human beings are of infinite worth, because they are all children of God, or on some other ground, and profess to conceive of mankind as a family which should live as a family, then our only valid objective is the transformation of society, not the building of a shelter for the saints or a secular elite within a corrupt social order, which is in effect assumed to be beyond redemption.

In our own day, many people are attracted to the Jehovah's Witnesses and the Seventh Day Adventists. They are growing. I think it must be granted that as dissenters from the prevailing culture they are pretty effective. There is no question that their members find an intense and deeply satisfying fellowship in their movement. It is also true that in these denominations there are standards regarding the use of income and a degree of economic sharing which one does not find in the more respectable churches. But these people do not live in communities of the kind we usually associate with that term. They live much more in the mainstream of urban or rural life, and mingle more constantly with people than communitarians generally do.

The same may be said of the early Christians, and it will certainly not be contended that they were not effective or that they did not achieve *koinonia* of a remarkable kind, even though they did not live in some Middle Eastern or Italian Rifton or Primavera settlement, but rather in a second or third-century equivalent of London, Paris, or New York. "See how these Christians love one another," their neighbors used to remark.

Is there not something "precious" and "fragile" about many "community" experiments in comparison with these past and contemporary movements? I have puzzled over the question whether many community experiments are not outlets for certain types of intellectuals and disoriented middle-class people and inherently incapable of expansion beyond very narrow limits.

In the second place, the justification of an intentional community as a factor in the transformation of society rather than as a shelter from society, would be that the community was a model of how society should, and eventually might, be organized; in place of a competitive economy here we have a model of cooperative economy. The problem that confronts us in this realm stems from the development of technology; how in a super-technological civilization keep the human spirit from extinction, and generate brotherhood? It is possible that some of the European "communities of work" are making some contribution to the solution of this problem. It does not seem to me that any

of our recent American experiments have solved it. If I understand the situation, it would also be correct to say that the more viable "communities of work" in Europe owe their existence largely to the fact that people simply needed to make a living. Another question that puzzles me, therefore, is whether an economic problem may be solved more effectively if it is tackled from an economic base or urge rather than by a group which feels (or thinks it feels) a sense of community and brotherhood, and then turns to the problem of making a living which will be consonant with that motivation.

If intentional communities seem not to give a convincing clue as to how to adjust positively to modern technology, how to make it serve true human needs and not just foster immature or perverse desires, another weakness seems to me to be that they do not make nearly as decisive a break with the prevailing economic system as their members want to make, and apparently think in many cases that they have been able to make. In one way or another most communities depend on subsidies or contributions from those who make or have made money in the prevailing economy. Fairly often, some of their members take jobs outside the community. The communities have to buy and sell within the price system; they have to own property, and so on.

(This article is from Liberation, September, 1958, and is reprinted with permission.)

## TECHNOLOGY AND CULTURE OF THE SMALL COMMUNITY

By Arthur E. Morgan

In my early professional career, though I was active as an engineer, my major interest was what I considered to be a serious fault of American education and social structure. The smaller communities of America, except for "bedroom" communities of the metropolis, were being starved economically and culturally. The small community was, not a place to live and have a good life, but a service station for economic activity. The energy, culture and vigor was being driven from the small communities to the larger cities, leaving them poor places to live. The most dominant and striking example in America was the agricultural town. Its main reason for being was, not as a place to live a full and interesting life, but as a service center for agriculture. Aside from three or four churches and the public school, the community activities largely revolved around exploiting labor and land to serve the urban need for food.

The same was true of other small and medium sized communities. The railway division towns were kept alive by the railroad. There was little else of interest in the community. Mining towns, fishing towns, steel mill towns, and industrial towns in general were sorry places to live. This is also largely true of college towns. A person who wanted a wider interest for his life had to go to the metropolis. So the smaller towns in America did not gain reputation as good places to live.

There was another reason for the low repute of small towns. The money made in the small community was taken to the big city. Much of the agricultural wealth of Iowa and Illinois went to Chicago. The small town had only the leavings.

Yet the small town throughout human history has been the carrier of great values from the past. The family as an institution has been interwoven with small social units. Friendliness and neighborliness had their origin in the small social groups of the ancient past. Intimate human relations began there. Men get the common wisdom of life from intimate human relations. In the traditional small community children passed along the common arts and ways of life from older to younger. In the ancient small community the basis of general humanity was passed down through the generations by general, everyday human contact. Enough people commonly came to the cities from smaller communities to keep somewhat alive the human pattern of life.

As a very young man I spent much time in surveying work in and about the small communities of my state, and saw them intimately. I saw their people as the carriers of the basic human culture, as it was not presented in the city. I saw also the absence of varied cultural values. They had little access to curiosity and adventure in the culture of literature, science and art. Their existence was largely as parts of the service to agriculture.

Was there no place for whole living, for carrying forward from the past the basic ways and traditions which hold humanity together and keep it going, while at the same time opening the way to great human values which men have won in the course of living and inquiring?

What can any one person do to bring about a reconstruction of life and society? Of course it is a social job, in which many men must work, no one contributing more than a mite. I determined to make my own small contribution. As to a site, I made a search. From the topographic maps of New York and New England, I search for possible favorable localities, and marked fifty or a hundred on the maps. Then I assigned one of my engineers, a graduate from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, to make a survey of the locations marked on the maps, and to report to me. When he had done this, my wife and I visited many of these localities, and chose one tract of land.

At about that time the American Unitarian Association arranged for my appointment to be a trustee of Antioch College, possibly to help save an endowment fund of \$100,000, in which it might have a residual interest, when the ailing college should close. It had about fifteen or twenty college students, and a total annual budget of about \$15,000.

The college was located at Yellow Springs, a very quiet village of 1,800 population. The more educated families who had come because of Horace Mann's presidency of Antioch were almost all gone through their children's movement to the city. It was without industries, without water or sewerage, with a health problem known as "the Yellow Springs disease," caused by ground water pollution. A large part of the population were retired farmers, past the age of great activity. Possibly a quarter of the population was black. It was far enough from Dayton not to be considered a suburb. Practically no one lived in Yellow Springs and worked in the nearer cities. Only the main street could be travelled by auto after a heavy rain. This would be my laboratory. It did not seem to be unfairly favorable for a great social experiment.

I decided to move my project to Yellow Springs, and to try to have an all-round development of the college and of the personalities we should deal with. We introduced all round educational interests, in addition to the special field in which a student would be spending his life. In addition to such scholarship we would aim at healthy social adjustment, and preparation for economic competence. The part of the program which drew most popular attention was the program of alternating work and study.

We had similar aims for the community. There was almost no way to make a living in the community except by selling the usual merchandise to one another. The economic level was low.

Having decided to come to Antioch College at Yellow Springs, the first requirement was to bring the spirit of adventure and inquiry to the college, and to gather a faculty of open-minded and inquiring men and women. But a dead town is not a good environment to which to bring inquiring minds.

We also had to have industry. It should not be in the major channels of productions and distribution, but it should be associated with inquiry, and with pioneer standards of justice, worker relations, and community responsibility.

We started our students at inventing new kinds of industry. We steered away from main line industries, and from the main lines of competition. We invented or adapted new industries. We usually started in barns or college buildings. These grew to have a wide variety of products.

Three thousand years ago China had an interesting technology, which we know as the "lost wax process". The backwoods villages of Africa used the same process, using beeswax and clay. There were two or three such industries in the United States, but they did not disclose much originality. We would try that. After three Antioch students had looked into it and pronounced the idea as visionary, Morris Bean, a farm boy from North Dakota and an Antioch student, agreed to do some serious research. We started work in an abandoned barn, with the help of a man who knew sand-casting. One of our first successful jobs was casting the bronze bases of the pillars of the Archives Building in Washington.

We found aluminum to be especially suitable for such a process. An Antioch student who had worked with Morris Bean in his barn suggested that the process would be promising for making auto tire molds. Morris Bean asked for the privilege of trying to make tire molds, then being made in the main plant of the Goodyear Tire Company. The trial was so successful that in the same barn they began to make tire molds first for the Goodyear Company, then for Goodrich and Firestone. In enlarged quarters Morris Bean and Company grew to making nearly all the tire molds in the United States, and from that spread to a large number of products for which the process was well adapted.

A nearly universal short-coming of small communities is lack of a spirit of inquiry and of research, with resulting lack of critical inquiry. We must have these qualities in order to be free and creative. I started a project of inquiring about how health and vitality are enlarged and preserved. With Lester Sontag, a country doctor from a small Minnesota town in charge, the research project began. Interest developed in what we were doing, which

is research on problems of human development and we now find our research laboratories and resources in demand. This project is now Fels Research Laboratory and has a building costing \$1,500,000, with an income of \$500,000 a year.

A young man, Sergius Vernet, working in the research laboratory at Antioch, observed that when water froze in a pipe, the pipe burst. He would make that pressure to some useful work. Many materials exert pressure on thawing or freezing. This process made possible an industry too large for Yellow Springs. It was licensed to two firms, while various collateral Yellow Springs industries did research that has been involved, developed into the Vernay industry of \$7,000,000 a year.

A student in the Antioch science class, Hardy Trolander, continued research after graduation, and developed equipment which would record very slight changes of time, such as a thousandth of a second, and developed a market in need of such refinement. He also observed that many health officials, industries and others needed to measure the percentage of oxygen in water. They had to get samples of water from a stream and take it to a laboratory for testing. Hardy Trolander and his associates at Yellow Springs Instrument Company worked out a device which one may operate by putting one end of a rod in the water and reading the percentage of oxygen on the other end of the rod. Such products bring a business of \$1,500,000 a year. These and other Yellow Springs industries produce \$25,000,000 a year or more. Thus the quality of industry and imagination are encouraged.

Some of the more significant achievements of the community have been seemingly independent actions, yet in harmony with the general trend. For instance, two boys, employees of a local feed store which failed, in adjusting themselves to the new circumstances, bought the farmer's eggs and delivered their wheat seed. The seed wheat was mixed with weed seed, and infected with a fungus. In a community where inquiry was in order they developed eight different cleaning processes for the seed and disinfected the seed from the fungus. From that little start this firm, Dewine and Hamma, has developed a seed business of \$4,000,000 a year. Given an atmosphere of inquiry, what happens may be a relatively independent endeavor, or the effort of small groups.

We continued to emphasize research as a way to develop a spirit of inquiry. There are now in the community about 200 men and women who are full-time research scientists. These persons, together with our industrialists infect the community with a spirit of inquiry and progress.

No one person does much by himself. When someone breaks a new path, some other person says to himself, "That looks interesting. I will go there." In Yellow Springs, except for a few early steps, every achievement is a group accomplishment, and some of the people who help are from

among those who have been living inconspicuously, and without seemingly large hope. For instance, the change of the Yellow Springs government from an incompetent and corrupt standard political organization to a council manager form called for a village manager. Howard Kahoe, the person appointed manager, was a young partner in a small, not too successful store on a side street. As village manager he has displayed excellent judgement, seemingly tireless energy, independence of special pressures, and ability to adjust to changes of circumstances. He has been sensitive to a wide range of cultural issues.

But there are other traits of personality which are necessary for all round living. Thus Yellow Springs has one of the highest per capita membership in the American Civil Liberties Union of American communities. At Yellow Springs there was little life in the village newspaper. When a suitable editor was found, because he had strong convictions, a conservative element of opinion in adjoining communities undertook to obstruct his efforts and financed and introduced a competing newspaper in the village. The intruding newspaper had much stronger financial support, and the local paper's chances for survival seemed very small. The editor and a few associates stood their ground, working for bare subsistence pay. In the opposition paper it was evident that those who produced it were working for money, and not for conviction. Its larger financial support did not save it from complete failure.

Community Service is committed to following this dream. The course of life at Yellow Springs as a first, imperfect trial, discloses the possibility. With a longer background of experience such experiments as that of Yellow Springs may greatly improve on what Yellow Springs has done.

Our trouble now is that Yellow Springs is growing too fast. The boyhood dream is largely fulfilled. But that is only the beginning. Too many people want to come to Yellow Springs to live. There are many communities which at the time we began were equal or superior to Yellow Springs, which have steadily lost many of the best of their members, and who wistfully subscribe to the doctrine that the day of the small village is past. People of small communities must eat to live, yet with inadequate income, what is there to do but move to the metropolis, as half a million small community people do each year? Without industry or other economic activity to provide sustenance, what can one do but leave? Moreover, their small towns are deadily uninteresting. What is there to interest young people? What hope is there at home?

If people's hopes are alive, and if they can be guided to a new vision of a human economy and to young industries or to industrial ideas, childhood and youth can be a period of hope and adventure. Adult life can be shared adventure, and general living and interest will thrive. Moreover, if a number of villages embark together on such programs, each community will have the companionship of other interesting communities.

Among the small communities in our country there must be many which would welcome such an adventure. Over the length and breadth of America there probably are many, many men and women who are asking themselves, of what value is my life? What can I do that will count? Many men and women will have different values which they would wish to advance. There need be no monopoly in such a quest. With many communities trying to find the way, each person might search for the type which would most fully realize his sense of values.

Community Service wishes to find, or perhaps to help originate communities where such a quest would be according to a deep desire, and to find young men and women (in spirit, at least) who would like to share in such an adventure, and to help such persons and communities find each other.

There should be several elements to the process. One element would be a search for desirable industries. There are many waiting to be found, or rediscovered. As illustrated by the Yellow Springs experience, it will be desirable to find one or several persons to search for such enterprises or other activities.

Many a person, who would like to live by his or her highest standards, finds that the habits of life require frequent compromise. If a good many communities were striving for excellence it probably would occur that among them would be men and women greatly desiring to live according to their best standards, and could chose living with others with common uncompromising ethical standards. The increased productivity of such a group would support such a course.